

Greektown Historic District

General Boundary: Monroe Avenue between Brush Street and St. Antoine.

Local

State

State Marker

National √ 5/6/82



Greektown Historic District

Photograph by John Renaud, courtesy of National Park Service

Historic overview:

Greektown has been a traditional center of ethnic retailing in Detroit throughout its 140-year history. It evolved from the farm of a French pioneer settler to a German residential and commercial area, and presently is a flourishing Greek commercial zone. It is also one of the last viable Victorian commercial streetscapes in downtown.

Greektown was originally part of the Beaubien Farm, beginning in 1758. With successive generations, the land was subdivided and sold in the 1830s, a time of German immigration. Germans dominated this area for 70 years. During this period, they shared the area with other ethnic groups. The first Jewish synagogue was located here, and blacks settled the area as well.

As the German Community became more prosperous, between 1905-1910, they moved out and were quickly replaced by Greeks. The first known Greek settler arrived in the city in 1890, and was able to foster Greek prosperity in the early part of the twentieth century by helping others start businesses. Gaining affluence, Greeks began to move their residences. By the 1920s Greektown was predominately commercial. Commercial and institutional development replaced the last residences in the 1950s and 1960s and the transition from residentially oriented businesses to restaurants and entertainment was accelerated. Greektown, once a 4-block area, was reduced to one block as all the surrounding structures became parking sites or institutional buildings.

Today, Greektown is a popular restaurant and shopping area. The first ethnic festival was held in Greektown in 1965, and has spurred the multi-ethnic festivals that are now an annual citywide event at the riverfront.

